Postdoctoral Titles

Definitions: A postdoctoral appointee is a research trainee who received the terminal degree, i.e., PhD, MD/PhD, MD, DVM, DPhil, SciD, etc., fewer than five (5) years before the appointment.

Policy: Postdoctoral appointees will receive one of two titles: “Postdoctoral Fellow” or “Postdoctoral Trainee,” followed by a number indicating the postdoctoral year, e.g., “Postdoctoral Fellow 3.” In the first year after receipt of the doctorate, the postdoctoral fellow or trainee will have a zero (in other words, no number) following the title. Someone called Postdoctoral Fellow 4 normally would be in the final year of the appointment.

The Postdoctoral Trainee title is for a person awarded an individual Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) (normally an F32) or appointed to an institutional Kirschstein NRSA grant (normally a T32).

Postdoctoral appointees hired after 1 September 2009 will have only these titles.

Procedure: Postdoctoral fellows employed before 1 September 2009 who have held the postdoctoral title for more than five years will receive an appointment to other research titles (e.g., Research Associate III or Research Scientist) or junior faculty titles (tenure-track or non-tenured). This transition will begin 1 March 2010, when the Research Scientist ladder will be available. In consideration of immigration regulations, which require time to implement, this policy will take full effect 1 September 2010.